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V.—THE ROMANTICISM OF GUY DE MAUPASSANT

The naturalistic reaction against Romanticism was a more or less conscious return to classical models.¹ Romantic diffuseness was banished. The limpid prose of the classical *conteurs* came back to its own. The ideal of the naturalistic novelist was to maintain a classical, impersonal point of view, which rendered impossible the gushing of Romantic lyricism. Nineteenth-century science, heir to the *raison* of Rousseau's enemies, the *philosophes*, replaced Romantic emotion. Disdaining the fantastic plots of the Romanticists, the naturalists tended to make of their novels merely a series of scenes, like *Le Sage*, and like *Marivaux*.

Of such naturalism, the purest representative was Guy de Maupassant. David-Sauvageot compares his style to that of Racine and of Molière.² Jules Lemaître finds in *Bel-Ami* the clearness and concision of expression which characterized the French novelists of the eighteenth century.³ According to Georges Pellissier, his common sense and sane powers of observation rank him at once among the great French classical authors.⁴

Maupassant's literary form reflects the influence of Flaubert, whose passion for an abstract "*beau pur, un beau de toute éternité*"⁵ led him to admire unreservedly the classical technique of Boileau. "Ce vieux croûton de

¹ "La composition classique est plus voisine de la terre, et partant plus près de nous [*i. e.*, the realists]," A. David-Sauvageot, in Petit de Julleville's *Langue et littérature française*, VIII, p. 11.

² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

³ *Revue bleue* (3d series, no. 26), XLII, p. 802 (June 29, 1889).

⁴ Petit de Julleville, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

⁵ *Journal des Goncourt*, II, p. 159.

Boileau," wrote Flaubert, "vivra autant que qui que ce soit, parce qu'il a su faire ce qu'il a fait."⁶ Hence for seven years Flaubert inexorably consigned the imperfect *contes* and *nouvelles* of his pupil to the waste-basket. "Le talent n'est qu'un long travail," he would explain, quoting Buffon. Maupassant also drew suggestions from Mérimée, who was distinguished not only for an objectivity carried almost to the point of affectation, but also for his classical form, which had an important influence in the transition from the diffuseness of the Romanticists to the correctness of the naturalists. In his poetic effusions, also, Maupassant was chiefly influenced by Bouilhet, whose life ambition it was to be the author of one brief masterpiece, polished like a gem.

Even more than his master Flaubert, Maupassant achieved a reputation for impersonality.⁷ Brunetière declares that his works are as impersonal as those of the classical writers.⁸ Like La Bruyère, he took notes as a detached observer.⁹ Unfortunately, Maupassant, unlike his friend Marie Bashkirtseff, did not follow the example of the Goncourt brothers in publishing his *Journal*, which doubtless would have been as interesting to examine as the *calepins* of the impressionists or the *garde-manger* which

⁶ *Correspondance* (Conard edition), II, p. 138.

⁷ "Par ces théories, Flaubert se rapproche sensiblement de la doctrine classique, et son impassibilité ressemble fort à la raison du XVII^e siècle" (G. Lanson, *Histoire de la littérature française*, 1912, p. 1074).

⁸ *Revue des deux mondes*, LXXXIX (1888), p. 697. Cf. Doumic, *ibid.*, 3d series, CXX (1893), p. 189: "Aussi l'impersonnalité est-elle le caractère qui frappe d'abord dans l'œuvre de Maupassant."

⁹ According to the testimony of M. Charles Lapierre, Maupassant declares that he kept a daily record of the occurrences which struck him as important. Cf. A. Lombroso, *Souvenirs sur Maupassant*, Rome, 1905, p. 612 (*Souvenirs intimes de M. Ch. Lapierre*).

Balzac mentions in his correspondence. Instead, he carried impersonality to such a degree as to profess that an author owes to his readers only his books. On that ground he refused to allow not only his notes, but even his photograph to be published.

Maupassant was also a classicist by his nearly exclusive study of the subject of man. With much gusto he quoted the classical motto, "Je tâche que rien de ce qui touche les hommes ne me soit étranger." It was the eternal human of Molière, and especially the eternal feminine of Racine, which attracted him.

In his observation of the human species, Maupassant, following the classicists, concentrated his attention upon the rational adult. In his writings we find no such joy in innocent babes as is expressed in poems like Hugo's *Lorsque l'enfant paraît*, no such idealization of childhood as distinguishes Rousseau's *Émile*. The children who play important parts in his stories are not quite as rare as the *Louisons* of the seventeenth century, but are apt to be confronted at an early age with the mysteries which belong to years of maturity. Little Simon, in *le Papa de Simon*, suffers cruelly because he is not treated like other boys. La petite Roque is the victim of a criminal assault at the age of twelve. *Châli*, and her companions, ranging between the ages of six and eight years, are already inmates of an Oriental harem. Children are mentioned frequently enough, as in *le Baptême*, *le Petit*, *une Famille*, etc., but are usually described not for themselves, but for the effect which they produce upon adults. Where they are not frankly regarded as a calamity, they are apt to be treated as part of the mechanism of the plot, like Astyanax and Joas.

By his very realism, Maupassant resembles the classicists. His master Flaubert had recognized the classical

principle of selection in art, and had thus tended to a realism which made of him what Faguet calls "une manière de Le Sage, plus pénétrant, plus vigoureux et plus amer. . . ." ¹⁰ Maupassant also, departing from the photographic art of the impressionists, attempted a realism which was "truer than truth itself." Therefore Zola was justified in comparing him with Molière, La Fontaine, etc., "ceux qui sont la raison et la lumière de notre littérature. . . ." ¹¹

Is it actually true, then, as critics have declared, that no lingering traces of Romanticism remain in Maupassant? ¹²

The answer to this question involves the perplexing problem of finding a definition for Romanticism. ¹³ On the one hand, shall we side with those who maintain that the Romantic spirit is something which we have always with us, sapping our reason by its sentimental riot, and paralyzing our wills by its fatalism? ¹⁴ On the other hand,

¹⁰ E. Faguet, *Flaubert in Grands écrivains français* (1913), p. 41.

¹¹ Maupassant, *Œuvres posthumes* (Conard edition), II, p. 223.

¹² Brunetière says that he is "plus naturaliste que Flaubert lui-même, en qui le romantique a subsisté jusqu'à son dernier jour, et les petits chefs-d'œuvre du naturalisme contemporain, c'est parmi les nouvelles de M. de Maupassant que l'on les trouvera" (*Revue des deux mondes*, LXXXIX [1888], p. 697). Faguet writes: "Si l'on veut plus tard étudier le réalisme bien en lui-même, soustraction faite de tout ce qui n'est lui, on éliminera peu à peu, les uns après les autres, seulement tous les romanciers du XIX^e siècle, et l'on ne retiendra que Maupassant comme nous ayant donné le réalisme tout pur . . ." (*Revue bleue*, LII, July 15, 1893). Pellissier observes: ". . . il est le plus naturaliste de nos romanciers, ou plutôt le seul vraiment naturaliste" (Petit de Julleville, *op. cit.*, VIII, p. 214). Lanson, in a chapter having as one of its captions "Guy de Maupassant: un vrai, complet, pur réaliste," declares: "La répression de la sensibilité, l'étude sévère de l'objet, ne coûtaient aucune peine à Guy de Maupassant" (*op. cit.*, p. 1084).

¹³ See H. A. Beers, *English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*, Chapter I.

¹⁴ Pierre Lasserre, *le Romantisme français* (1911), p. 541.

shall we join the party of those who believe that Romanticism was a movement which came to a head in France about 1830, furnished the inspiration for the greatest French literature and art during the nineteenth century, and was as good as dead about 1845? We have a wide range of choice; for the definitions of Romanticism are nearly as numerous as the authors who have written on the subject. Scientific critics who attempt to discuss it apparently become imbued with its spirit, and define it lyrically, in terms that fit their own feelings and emotions.

If we are to accept any of the broader definitions of Romanticism, we shall inevitably become involved in a discussion which is growing as trite as it has always been fruitless. Ever since Flaubert confessed that he felt within himself two men, one realistic, the other Romantic, there has been an endless series of books and pamphlets establishing to the author's satisfaction the Romanticism of various realistic, and classical authors. Zola was of course one of the first objects of attack. The Romantic side of his "naturalism" had early been exposed by Flaubert himself, and Zola had pleaded guilty. Numerous critics have since pointed out Romantic tendencies in those apostles of the *histoire vraie*, the Goncourt brothers, while Racine, St. Francis of Assisi, *et al.*, have received similar denunciation.

Doubtless this deluge of indictments may be attributed in part, at least, to the conflicting definitions of Romanticism. Yet, even if we accept the term in its most *classical* sense, and confine its meaning to the principles of the *Préface de Cromwell* and of the second *Cénacle*, it still denotes a literary field which nurtured to an astonishing degree the seeds of its own destruction. If it is probable that few elements of Romanticism, so understood, could not be discovered in classicism, it is certain that Romanti-

cism, as defined by Hugo, contained all the elements of naturalism.

In order to arrive at a common understanding of terms, let us select from the number of classical qualities which, as we have seen, are frequently credited to Maupassant, two upon which there is practical unanimity of opinion: (1) his realism, in the selective sense of the term; (2) his impersonality. It is as a sort of corollary to these two propositions in particular that critics have harmoniously advanced the assertion that Maupassant was the least Romantic of all the realists. We have thus the clue for a double-barreled definition of Romanticism, which, though arbitrary, will have at least the advantage of being appropriate to the occasion. The first term of our definition is suggested by M. Faguet, according to whose analysis "le fond du romantisme c'est l'horreur de la réalité et le désir ardent d'y échapper. Le romantisme est essentiellement romanesque."¹⁵ The second term will be taken from M. Lanson, who, in common with many other critics, feels that Romanticism is essentially lyrical, or subjective.¹⁶ Accordingly, all that is realism (in the selective sense of the term intended by Maupassant himself), all that is objectivity will be assigned summarily to the category of *realism*; all that is "horreur de la réalité," all that is subjectivity, will be similarly assigned to the category of *Romanticism*.

No claim is here advanced that the long-sought definition of Romanticism is thus formulated for the first time. Our one advantage is that, while using the word *Romanticism* in no strange or unusual sense, we succeed in making of it merely a convenient symbol for two qualities in which Maupassant was universally conceded to

¹⁵ E. Faguet, *Flaubert*, *cit.*, p. 28.

¹⁶ G. Lanson, *op. cit.*, p. 930.

be eminently lacking. The two terms of the definition will be found to supplement each other. For example, exactly what is the "horreur de la réalité?"

It is obvious that a considerable portion of Maupassant's work deals with unreality. In stories like *le Horla* and *Lui* he treats the subject of hallucination. In *Qui sait?* he expresses doubt as to whether or not he may have been "le jouet d'une étrange vision." Around the phantom of la petite Roque centers the entire action of that tale of madness and remorse. Superstition, and even the supernatural, occupy an important place in his writings. The hero of *l'Apparition* can find no logical explanation for his adventure, the uncanny wolf in *un Loup* is endowed with nearly human faculties, while *Misti* is the tale of a cat having human passions. There are also instances, too frequent to enumerate, where the author is concerned with an emotionalism which runs counter to reason. It is a vast world of unreality which Maupassant discloses to his readers. Does he therefore become by definition Romantic?

By the second term of our definition, the answer is in the negative, provided he maintains an impartial, objective point of view—the classical impersonality on which critics have insisted in connection with Maupassant. As David-Sauvageot remarks, realism may properly be a study of the nightmares of delirium tremens. However, let the author cease to study such examples of the vagaries of the human intellect as mere *phenomena*, and attempt to intervene personally in his narrative to prejudice the feelings of his reader—he has failed as a realist, because he has sacrificed that impersonality which is absolutely essential to his success.

For example, Maupassant is a realist so long as, from the point of view of a detached observer, he depicts in

le Testament M. de Bourneval, an avowed Rousseauist, who knows by heart the *Contrat social* and the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. But when Maupassant, speaking through the mouth of the supposed narrator of the story, declares himself violently in favor of Rousseauism, because of its "bouleversement—de notre morale imbécile,"¹⁷ he demonstrates that he himself is a prejudiced witness, guilty of special pleading, and of precisely the kind of emotionalism of which *le Testament* is supposed to be an objective study. His effort to work upon the feelings of the reader is especially manifest at the conclusion of the story:

"Eh bien, je dis que le testament de ma mère est une des choses les plus belles, les plus loyales, les plus grandes qu'une femme puisse accomplir. N'est-ce pas votre avis?"

Je lui tendis les deux mains: "Oui, certainement, mon ami."¹⁸

The answer to the question as to what extent Maupassant was Romantic will be found, however, to depend somewhat on general considerations. Shall we limit realism to the narrow meaning understood by the author, as referring only to the immediate present, to the world of sense and flesh? Or shall we understand it in a broader way, as embracing the universe of sense and of flesh, of the past as well as of the present?

I. Let us first meet the author on his own grounds and consider realism only in the narrow meaning which he intended. If we so confine our observations, we shall find that on the whole he gives a greater impression of reality than any other French fiction writer of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, a close examination will reveal certain Romantic tendencies even here—both in his fundamental point of view and in matters of technique,

¹⁷ *Le Testament*, in *Contes de la bécasse*, pp. 159, 160.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

such as his style and his methods of assembling materials. In his point of view, as we have already begun to note, there was frequently a subjective tendency, an exaggerated *ego*. This excessive emphasis on the *moi* in his writings is proved, (1) by the author's expressed revolt against his mission in life; (2) by the manner in which he carries that spirit of revolt beyond the bounds of his own personality, and puts it into the mouths of his characters—especially when it is a question of a revolt against law and society in favor of the instincts; (3) by his pleas for emotional justice, the logical result of his championship of the instincts against the reason—the author's purpose being, here in particular, clearly propaganda, not an objective study of character; (4) by his occasional revels in the emotionalism of dreams, which he prefers to the harshness of waking reality.

These four headings under which I purpose to divide the manifestations of Maupassant's subjectivity will now be discussed separately.

1. The author's exaggerated *ego* is very apparent in the little manifesto which he issued regarding his mission in life. Like Hugo, who called himself the lighthouse of mankind and the "Memnon" of Napoleon's "soleil," he feels that an author has a *calling* which obliges him to enlighten his fellows. If Musset has the figure of a poet eating his heart out in order to provide verses for humanity, as the pelican dies for its young, so Maupassant makes a painful confession of the suffering which his destiny as a man of letters causes him:

Je porte en moi cette seconde vue qui est en même temps toute la force et toute la misère des écrivains. J'écris parce que je comprends, et je souffre de tout ce qui est parce que je le connais trop—et surtout parce que sans le pouvoir goûter je le regarde en moi-même dans le miroir de ma pensée.

Qu'on ne nous envie pas, mais qu'on nous plaigne, car voici en quoi l'homme de lettres diffère de ses semblables. . . .¹⁹

2. The number of Maupassant's stories in which his characters are evidently his mouthpiece, and in which the purpose of the author appears to be propaganda rather than an undistorted reflection of the truth, is considerable. The refrain is always the same: a Rousseauistic revolt against all that tends to repress instincts and passions, for the sake of which he invariably enters the lists against classical *raison*.

In the following passage, he pleads for the primitive savage idealized by Rousseau and his followers:

On a fait des lois qui combattent nos instincts, il le fallait; mais les instincts toujours sont les plus forts, et on a tort de leur résister, puisqu'ils viennent de Dieu, tandis que les lois ne viennent que des hommes.²⁰

Maupassant attacks not only man-made laws, in the name of a naturalistic Deity that would be acceptable to the vicar of Savoy, but also man-made conventionality, the propriety of the *honnête homme*:

C'était vraiment une image admirable et naïve de la passion simple, de la passion charnelle et pudique cependant, telle que la nature l'avait mise dans les êtres avant que l'homme l'eût compliquée et défigurée par toutes les nuances du sentiment.²¹

Sponsor as he is for all the instincts, he reserves his most sympathetic treatment for the paternal instinct, which in his work plays a weightier rôle than that of motherhood. In fact, the paternal instinct becomes in his writings a sort of hobby, which he lugs in on every possible occasion. The first of the stories entitled *le Baptême*²²

¹⁹ *Sur l'eau*, p. 80.

²⁰ *Les Conseils d'une grand'mère*, in *la Maison Tellier*, p. 283.

²¹ *Berthe*, in *Yvette*, pp. 264-265. ²² *Miss Harriet*, pp. 245-253.

is a case in point. More than one reader of this *conte* has been rather taken aback by its unexpected conclusion, where the guests at a christening find the priest, whose desire for offspring of his own must forever go unsatisfied, sobbing over the bedside of the child. The reader's sense of surprise is apt to persist, even after he reviews the apparently logical development which the author has given to his narrative here, as always. If we go further into the matter, and consider some of Maupassant's other stories, we shall reach the conclusion that the *dénoûment* of *le Baptême* is only another instance of the author's tendency to create characters not objectively, but as spokesmen for a favorite theory. In *un Fils*, the father of a degraded son is represented as declaring: "Et je sens, parfois, d'intolérables envies de l'embrasser."²³ It is in his instinct of paternity that Mme Parent is able to afflict her husband most cruelly.²⁴ Also, in *Clair de lune*, the author alludes feelingly to "cette sensation de paternité qui sommeille en tout homme."²⁵

3. Before taking up the third heading under which our author's subjectivity is here treated, namely his pleas for emotional justice, let us glance for a moment at his biography, which will confirm our suspicion that in him, as in the author of *Salammbô* and of *la Tentation de Saint Antoine*, there was a latent Romanticism. In 1876, we find him actually attempting an historical novel, the *Princesse de Béthune*, in defiance of Zola's ideas regarding

²³ *Contes de la bécasse*, p. 212.

²⁴ *M. Parent*, in the collection of that title, pp. 44 ff.

²⁵ *Clair de lune*, in the collection of that title, p. 6. Cf. *la Confession*, in *Toine*, p. 233: "Les pères, voyez-vous, n'aiment que plus tard. Ils n'ont point la tendresse instinctive et emportée des mères; il faut que leur affection s'éveille peu à peu, que leur esprit s'attache par des liens qui se nouent chaque jour entre les êtres vivants ensemble."

the *Théâtre naturaliste*.²⁶ After the publication of the *Soirées de Médan*, apparently he recanted. In a letter to the director of the *Gaulois*, he made a vehement attack upon the Romanticists, on account of whose influence theatrical halls could not tolerate a simple rascal on the stage. "C'est la morale romantique des foules qui force souvent les tribunaux à acquitter des particuliers et des drôlesses attendrissants, mais sans excuse."²⁷

Despite this plea for classical *raison*, the scenes of a considerable number of Maupassant's stories are laid in the court house. Sometimes the author is comical or satirical, but more often his sympathies are most subjectively on the side of the accused. Virtually without exception, the narrative ends with the statement that the accused was acquitted. The author's art is to palliate the crime as much as possible in the eyes of the reader.

In *un Parricide*, George Louis (no surname), called Le Bourgeois, is guilty of slaying his father and mother. In the trial he explains that he committed the crime in the heat of passion, because his parents had refused to recognize him. The case was carried over to the next session.²⁸ Warden Cavalier is the hero of *le Garde*.²⁹ He finds his nephew poaching on the grounds of his employer, M. Boniface, and punishes him severely. For revenge, the nephew sets fire to the house where his uncle is sleeping. Cavalier, awakened in time, shoots his nephew as he scampers away. The jury acquits him.

Jean-Nicolas Lougère is the cashier de M. Langlais. As

²⁶ *Correspondance*, in *Boule de suif*, p. xcix (Letter to Flaubert dated November 19, 1876).

²⁷ *Les Soirées de Médan—Comment ce livre a été fait*, in *Boule de suif*, p. 83.

²⁸ *Un Parricide*, in *Contes du jour et de la nuit*, pp. 185-195.

²⁹ *Le Garde*, in *Yvette*, pp. 233-247.

he finds existence monotonous after the death of Mme Lougère, he marries the cash-girl of a café. On account of her bad influence in the household, Langlais dismisses Lougère. Lougère kills his employer with a pair of scissors. The jury acquits him.³⁰

Rosalie Prudent is acquitted after confessing to having murdered her twin children, because her income of twenty francs per month is insufficient for their support. At the end of her testimony, half the jury is sobbing.³¹

4. The author occasionally strikes a lyrical note as he revels in the emotionalism of dreams. Jean Jacques Rousseau himself, indulging in delicious vagabond's dreams on the way to the orphanage at Turin to be confirmed, might have written this passage in *Julie Romain*: "Quoi de plus doux que de songer, en allant à grands pas sur la route?"³² Nay, rather the author recalls those troubadour dreamers, Jaufré Rudel and Arnaud de Marneil, who frankly desire to go on sleeping forever, rather than return to waking reality. In *Réveil* he declares: "Ce fut (la réalité n'a pas de ces extases), ce fut une seconde, d'un bonheur suraigu et surhumain, idéal et charnel, affolant, inoubliable."³³ The story concludes with the words: "Il n'y a que les rêves de bons dans la vie."

Let us leave the question of Maupassant's point of view, wherein there are seen to be subjective tendencies. Mat-

³⁰ *L'Assassin*, in *le Rosier de Madame Husson*, pp. 113-122.

³¹ *Rosalie Prudent*, in *la petite Roque*, pp. 145-152. The following stories of acquittals by juries have comical or satirical elements: *les Bécasses*, in *Monsieur Parent*, pp. 201-216; *Denis*, in *Miss Harriet*, pp. 167-180; *une Vente*, in *le Rosier de Madame Husson*, pp. 99-110; *le Trou*, in *le Horla*, pp. 65-76. *Au Bois*, in *Le Horla*, pp. 167-169, has sentimental tendencies.

³² *Julie Romain*, in *la petite Roque*, p. 203.

³³ *Réveil*, in *Mlle Fifi*, p. 132.

ters of technique will now be treated under the headings of (1) style, and (2) method of assembling materials.

1. In general it may be remarked that if Maupassant fails rather often in the cold objectivity and impressiveness of the classicist, it is somewhat more difficult to discover Romantic tendencies in his nearly impeccable style. Like Mérimée, he does not indulge in the orgies of description which marred the work of Chateaubriand and his disciples. It is perhaps only by a comparison of Maupassant's writings with those of the novelists of the eighteenth century that we may observe the impress which the Romantic convulsion made upon his style. The non-realistic or Romantic qualities of his style will be found to consist principally of little tricks, such as (a) exoticism, or (b) the pathetic fallacy, which he introduces for the sake of dramatic effect.

(a) Maupassant's story entitled *l'Épingle* has the same theme as the masterpiece of Abbé Prévost. As Maupassant remarks: "Cette fille-là, c'est Manon Lescaut revenue. C'est Manon qui ne pourrait pas aimer sans tromper, Manon, pour qui l'amour, le plaisir et l'argent ne font qu'un . . ." ³⁴ However, Maupassant's story has an exotic setting altogether unknown to the classical *conteurs*:

C'était loin, bien loin d'ici, sur une côte fertile et brûlante. Nous suivions, depuis le matin, le rivage couvert de récoltes et la mer bleue couverte de soleil. Des fleurs poussaient tout près des vagues, des vagues légères, si douces, endormantes. Il faisait chaud; c'était une molle chaleur, parfumée de terre grasse, humide et féconde; on croyait respirer des germes.

(b) The author is not content with transporting his reader from everyday reality, to a distant shore, with enchanted lights and aromas, where anything may happen.

³⁴ *L'Épingle*, in *Monsieur Parent*, p. 195.

By a sort of pathetic fallacy, he makes these natural phenomena accord sympathetically with the progress of the story. As the narrative begins, he remarks: "Le soleil baissait . . ." After the conversation has begun, he observes: "Derrière nous, le soleil s'enfonçait dans la mer, jetant sur la côte un brouillard de feu. Les orangers en fleurs exhalaient dans l'air du soir leur arôme violent et délicieux. Lui ne voyait rien que moi . . ." At the next stage of the story:

C'était l'heure crépusculaire où le soleil disparu n'éclaire plus la terre que par les reflets du ciel.

Il reprit:

—Est-ce que Jeanne de Limours vit encore?

The sunset and the odor of the orange-blossoms mark also the conclusion of the tale:

Voilà dix ans que je ne l'ai vue, et je l'aime plus que jamais!

La nuit s'était répandue sur la terre. Un parfum puissant d'orangers flottait dans l'air.

Even further from an unimpassioned reflection of reality is the use of the pathetic fallacy in describing the forest where la petite Roque was murdered. Maupassant speaks of . . . "de grandes larmes versées par les grands arbres tristes qui pleuraient jour et nuit sur la fin de l'année . . . et aussi peut-être sur le crime qu'ils avaient vu commettre sous leur ombre, sur l'enfant violée et tuée à leur pied."³⁵ In the same strain Byron, in *Childe Harold*, represents the forest of Ardennes as

Grieving, if aught inanimate e'er grieves,
O'er the unreturning brave. . . .

In this connection may be mentioned perhaps an exam-

³⁵ *La petite Roque*, in the collection of that title, p. 33.

ple of Romantic vertigo worthy also of *Childe Harold*. The case in point belongs as much to the instances of subjectivity as to those of lack of realism in the style of the author. As usual, when he is subjective, the author is making a plea for the instincts. In *Au Bois*, poor Mme Beaurain, with whom the author apparently sympathizes on the whole, is far from being coldly objective when she views the beauties of natural scenery. She exclaims:

Moi, quand il fait beau, aussi bien maintenant qu'autrefois, je deviens bête à pleurer, et quand je suis à la campagne, je perds la tête. La verdure, les oiseaux qui chantent, les blés qui remuent au vent, les hirondelles, qui vont si vite, l'odeur de l'herbe, les coquelicots, les marguerites, tout ça me rend folle! ³⁶

2. Our second consideration in connection with the lack of realism in matters of technique is the author's method of assembling his materials. However, this method is almost inseparably connected with the nature of the materials themselves. The opinion usually held is that Maupassant, making impartial, objective observations, carefully recorded his data in notebooks. As a matter of fact, we shall find that some of his materials are not the result of original observations at all, but of imitation of other authors, some of them unquestionably Romantic. Furthermore, even where his materials are apparently original, there is probably a certain bias in his system of observation, as is shown by the frequency with which he comes to treat the favorite themes of the Romantic school.

Before entering into the complicated details connected with Maupassant's method of gathering data, therefore, let us glance for a moment in a general way at his choice of themes, which alone lays him open to the suspicion of a kinship with the chief apostles of Romanticism.

³⁶ *Au Bois*, in *le Horla*, p. 165.

It is extremely unlikely that our author ever read *Don Juan*. Yet was it his selective realism, or his natural affinity for Byron and the Satanic school which caused him to reproduce several scenes in the poem which so greatly influenced the French Romanticists of the early 30's?

Julia, vainly attempting to resist handsome Don Juan,

. . . prays the Virgin Mary for her grace,
As being the best judge of a lady's case.³⁷

It was all in vain, for the instant Don Juan appeared

That night the Virgin was no longer prayed.³⁸

Mme Walter, seeking to avoid temptation, tries to pray,
but sees only the curly mustache of "Bel-Ami."³⁹

When Julia yields:

A little she strove, and much repented,
And whispering "I will n'er consent"—consented.⁴⁰

So Mme Guilleroy, fascinated by Olivier Bertin,

. . . voulut crier, lutter, le repousser, mais elle se donnait en se débattant, elle l'étreignait en criant: "Non, non, je ne veux pas."⁴¹

The boy whose irresistibly handsome features Julia caressed; the man whose cheek innocent Haidée was constrained to stroke; Antony, who, fascinated Adèle with his eye; Bel-Ami, who captured all women, from the courtesan at the Folies-Bergères to the wife of his employer—are of one and the same extraordinary *genus*. Whether examples of realism or Romanticism, they stand or fall together.

The same may be said for the too frequent tales of incest in Maupassant's works, which call to mind the

³⁷ *Don Juan*, Canto I, LXXV.

⁴⁰ *Don Juan*, I, CXVII.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, I, LXXVI.

⁴¹ *Fort comme la mort*, p. 40.

³⁹ *Bel-Ami*, p. 405.

Manfreds of the Satanic school, if not the *Renés* of the Emmanuel school.

We come now to the consideration of another favorite theme among the writers of the so-called Romantic school—that of the sinful woman ennobled by lofty sentiments in general and by love in particular—by an amorous passion in *Marion Delorme* and in *la Dame aux camélias*, by maternal affection in *Lucrèce Borgia*. The theme was only a variation of the numerous stories of the outlaw purified by love, as in *Belvédère*, *Jean Sbogar*, *Argow le pirate*, *Bug-Jargal*, *Hernani*, even in *les Misérables*. The avowed Romanticists who treated this theme might well claim here, as elsewhere, the Middle Ages as their source of inspiration, for had not Guido Guinicelli, in his *Amor e cor gentile*, declared that love, which purifies all things, can reside only in a noble heart?

The theme of the rehabilitated courtesan was also treated several times by Maupassant. In *Boule de suif*, the courtesan is the heroine, society is the offender. In the sequel, *Mlle Fifi*,⁴² the courtesan is vindicated. After killing a Prussian officer, for patriotic reasons, she was married by a patriot without prejudices who loved her for her splendid deed, as well as for herself, and “en fit une dame qui valut autant que beaucoup d’autres.”

By our definition, was this theme Romantic or realistic?

It appears that it was realistic. We are informed that, so far from being a figment of Romanticism, the heroine of *Boule de suif* and of *Mlle Fifi* actually lived, her real name being Adrienne Legay.⁴³ In fact, a critic who has made a most valuable contribution to the collection of

* A. Lombroso, *Souvenirs sur Maupassant*, p. 147 and note 1 (*l'Enfance et la jeunesse de Maupassant*, by A. Brisson, being an interview with Mme de Maupassant).

⁴³ A. Lombroso, *op. cit.*, pp. 351 ff.

documents relative to Maupassant assures us that it would have been possible for our author to "inscrire en marge le nom exact de la plupart de ses personnages, avec celui du hameau, du bourg, théâtre de l'action."⁴⁴

Despite such scrupulous realism, no basis in fact has yet been offered for the very essential *dénoûments* of *Boule de suif* and of *Mlle Fifi*. In the case of *Boule de suif*, the only evidence we possess is the indignant denial of the heroine.⁴⁵ As for the other story, it is perhaps significant to compare the flourishing lady described at the conclusion of *Mlle Fifi* with the real Adrienne Legay, dying in utter destitution, or, according to some reports, committing suicide because she was unable to endure her wretchedness.⁴⁶

Are we to believe that the favorable outcome of *Mlle Fifi* was the result of selective realism, or was it merely imitation—conscious or unconscious—of Romantic forebears? Perhaps Maupassant's own enthusiastic declaration that "des filles épousées deviennent en peu de temps de remarquables femmes du monde. . . ." ⁴⁷ may help to determine whether he had his prejudices in the matter.

Possibly even more light may be turned upon this subject by the consideration of Maupassant's regular method of assembling data. Nevertheless, it is here absolutely necessary to distinguish between realistic theory and realistic effect. In theory, we shall find upon analysis that Maupassant's method is as fallacious as that of the avowed Romanticists. In practice, he is saved from excesses by his usually sane powers of observation. Theoretically, he professes merely to reproduce faithfully what he has seen

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 147 (Testimony of Mme de Maupassant).

⁴⁷ *Réponse à M. Albert Wolff*, in *Mlle Fifi*, p. 279.

or heard. In theory, at least, he fails, because he is constantly guilty of juggling his materials to suit himself, or perhaps even of altering them altogether. This arbitrary handling of supposedly realistic observations in order to produce a desired result is especially evident, (a) in his complete alteration of his *dénoûments*; (b) in his mechanical shifting of episodes or descriptions from one situation to another.

(a) It is small wonder that the *dénoûment* of *Mlle Fif* does not seem to accord with the facts in the biography of Adrienne Legay. Changes of the sort apparent here were only a part of the author's regular procedure. Repeatedly he told the same tale with two exactly opposite *dénoûments*. Nor do we have here to deal with mere narratives of adventure, where the outcome may perfectly well be heads or tails, according to the caprice of fate. The conclusion in each case—particularly in that of *un Lâche*, the last of the stories with a double ending to be considered here—was a carefully prepared *dénoûment*, in which the conduct of the principal actors of the drama was foreshadowed by character analysis. The question arises: Was Maupassant, advocate of an extra-penetrating realism, actually, to adopt an algebraical simile, only the exponent of a sort of psychological square-root, for which the result might be equally well either a plus or a minus answer?

Let us consider a few examples.

One of Maupassant's stories with a double-ending is found in *les Dimanches d'un bourgeois de Paris*. It here appears that the hero, M. Patissot, on one of his long tramps, meets a married couple who have lost their way.⁴⁸ Desiring to be of service, he convinces them by his map

⁴⁸ *Les Dimanches d'un bourgeois de Paris*, in *Œuvres posthumes*, II, pp. 11 ff.

that they are at Versailles, instead of being on their way to Rueil, as they suppose. Suddenly the husband, discovering that he has lost his pocketbook, starts in search of it, amid the imprecations of his wife. Patissot continues the journey with the wife, but all have agreed to meet at Versailles. Eventually Patissot and the lady find themselves at Bougival, not at Versailles. At a restaurant they take a meal, for which Patissot naturally pays, because the lady's pocketbook has been lost. Then, as she is now orientated, she returns homeward, refusing to allow the bewildered Patissot to accompany her.

Four years later, Maupassant republished this story as *Souvenir*.⁴⁹ In the second version, the incidents, and even the language remained almost identical with the original up to the *dénoûment*. The resemblance may be observed by a comparison of the following passages:

*Les Dimanches d'un bourgeois de Paris*⁵⁰

Devant lui s'ouvrait une ravissante allée dont le feuillage un peu grêle laissait pleuvoir partout, sur le sol, des gouttes de soleil qui illuminaient des marguerites blanches cachées dans les herbes. Elle était allongée interminablement, et vide, et calme.

Seul, un gros frelon solitaire et bourdonnant la suivait, s'arrêtant parfois sur une fleur qu'il inclinait, et repartait presque aussitôt pour se reposer encore un peu plus loin. Son corps énorme semblait en velours brun rayé de jaune, porté par des ailes trans-

*Souvenir*⁵¹

Devant moi, s'ouvrit une ravissante allée, dont le feuillage un peu grêle laissait pleuvoir partout sur le sol des gouttes du soleil qui illuminaient des marguerites blanches. Elle s'allongeait interminablement, vide et calme. Seul, un gros frelon solitaire et bourdonnant la suivait, s'arrêtait parfois pour boire une fleur qui se penchait sous lui et repartant presque aussitôt pour se reposer encore un peu plus loin. Son corps énorme semblait en velours brun rayé de jaune, porté par des ailes transparentes

⁴⁹ *Souvenir*, in *Contes du jour et de la nuit*, pp. 261-293.

⁵⁰ *Les Dimanches d'un bourgeois de Paris*, *cit.*, pp. 14, 15.

⁵¹ *Souvenir*, *cit.*, pp. 265, 266.

parentes, et démesurément petites. . . .

Dès qu'il se fut remis debout, il aperçut là-bas, très loin, deux personnes qui venaient vers lui en faisant des signes. Une femme agitait son ombrelle, et un homme, en manches de chemise, portait sa redingote sur son bras.

et démesurément petites.

Mais tout à coup j'aperçus au bout de l'allée deux personnes, un homme et une femme, qui venaient vers moi. . . . La femme en effet agitait son ombrelle, et l'homme, en manches de chemise, la redingote sur un bras, élevait l'autre en signe de détresse.

The *dénoûment* of *Souvenir*, however, is entirely different from that of the original. When the restaurant is reached the lady, instead of refusing to allow her cavalier to accompany her, consents.

On another occasion, M. Patissot listens to the unhappy story of a Norman whom he meets by chance.⁵² The Norman relates how he met a certain Victorine, in the street, one day. Though she pleased him very much, he dared not accost her, but glanced at her in a manner easily understood. The next day, meeting her in the same place, he was less abashed. He saluted her, and she smiled back. The third day he had the courage to address her. She consented to go to his house, where they were surprised by the young man's uncle, who disinherited him. The girl fled.

Four years later, Maupassant reverted to this theme. One day, he says, he met a certain Emma in the street. A significant look was exchanged. The next day he saw her in the same place. Finally he mustered up the courage to speak to her. She consented to go to his house. This time it was the landlady who surprised them, and the conclusion is entirely different from that of the original.⁵³

As M. Maynial has already pointed out, the story

⁵² *Les Dimanches d'un bourgeois de Paris*, cit., p. 51, etc.

⁵³ *La Patronne*, in *les Sœurs Rondoli*, p. 67, etc.

entitled *un Lâche*⁵⁴ is practically a word for word reproduction of the episode of the duel in *Bel-Ami*.⁵⁵ Let us compare the following:

Bel-Ami

. . . Et ce doute l'envahit, cette inquiétude, cette épouvante! Si une force plus puissante que sa volonté, dominatrice, irrésistible le domptait, qu'arriverait-il? Oui, que pouvait-il arriver?

Certes il irait sur le terrain puisqu'il voulait y aller. Mais s'il tremblait? Mais s'il perdait connaissance? Et il songea à sa situation, à sa réputation, à son avenir.⁵⁶

Un Lâche

Et ce doute l'envahit, cette inquiétude, cette épouvante; si une force plus puissante que sa volonté, dominatrice, irrésistible, le domptait, qu'arriverait-il? Oui, que pouvait-il arriver? Certes il irait sur le terrain puisqu'il voulait y aller. Mais s'il tremblait? Mais s'il perdait connaissance? Et il songea à sa situation, à sa réputation, à son nom.⁵⁷

In the duel described in *Bel-Ami* nobody is hurt, and the whole affair is treated rather lightly by the author; in *un Lâche*, the *dénoûment* is a suicide.

Thus it is evident that in the matter of *dénoûments*, at least, Maupassant was theoretically less realistic than many of the chief apostles of the so-called Romantic school, because they, in treating historical subjects—in *Henri III et sa cour* and in the fantastic *Ruy Blas*—were obliged to create a background that was fairly in accord with well-known facts. Indeed, nearly all the historical dramas of the Romantic school were more or less prodigious evocations of the past. In so far as these dramas were false to history they have been made the target of a pitiless criticism. Maupassant, on the other hand, dealing with the more obscure characters of everyday life, was able to alter his materials at will and with impunity.

⁵⁴ *Contes du jour et de la nuit*, pp. 107-121. See E. Maynial, *la Composition dans les romans de Maupassant*, in *Revue bleue*, vol. LXXII, p. 607 (Nov. 7, 1903).

⁵⁵ *Bel-Ami*, p. 238.

⁵⁶ *Bel-Ami*, pp. 236 ff.

⁵⁷ *Un Lâche*, *cit.*, p. 113.

(b) The juggling of plots was only the beginning of his method. He resorted even more frequently to the practice of using certain favorite episodes or descriptions over and over again, often without the flimsiest pretext of adapting his material to the different situations. In fact, in many cases, there was little or no alteration of the verbiage from one story or description to another.⁵⁸

Only a glimpse at this phase of Maupassant's work will be attempted here, as M. Maynial has already made valuable investigations of the use of the *nouvelles* in Maupassant's novels,⁵⁹ while the editors of the definitive edition have greatly supplemented M. Maynial's contributions, especially in their notes on the *Œuvres posthumes*.

In the tragic tale entitled *l'Aveu*, which later appeared in the *Contes du jour et de la nuit* as *la Confession*, Marguerite de Thérèlles confesses on her death-bed to the murder of Henry de Sampierre, *fiancé* of her sister Suzanne. Beside herself with jealousy, she had accomplished the crime by giving Henry some cakes containing ground glass. About four years later, Maupassant returned to this story, the villain now being a teacher named Moiron, who had lost his own children, and was insanely jealous of other men whose offspring survived. He utilized

⁵⁸ Allowance should be made for the fact that repetitions were almost inevitable in view of the enormous production of the author—more than two hundred short stories in ten years, not to mention novels and books of travel. The situation was aggravated by his publisher, Victor Havard, who was forever goading him for more copy. "Yvette et les 5 contes vont faire un volume de 246 à 250 pages," wrote Havard on October 15, 1884; "c'est un peu court pour un volume de nouvelles. Et cependant il n'était pas possible de 'blanchir' davantage, car c'est le même texte que *Miss Harriet*" (A. Lumbroso, *op. cit.*, p. 397).

⁵⁹ E. Maynial, *op. cit.* Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 563 ff.

his position to administer to children under his charge cakes containing ground glass, with fatal results.⁶⁰

The enriched courtesan, Mlle Victorine Charlotte Cachelin, in *l'Héritage*, was an excellent business woman. In discussing her financial matters she "racontait sa fortune avec la complaisance d'un vieux soldat qui dit ses campagnes. Elle énumérait ses achats, les propositions qu'on lui avait faites depuis, les plus-values, etc."⁶¹ In *Divorce*, we find Mlle Cachelin's picture over again. Here also the heroine, the wealthy courtesan Mlle Chante-frise, had a level head for business affairs. "Elle en parla aussitôt en femme pratique, sûre d'elle, sûre des chiffres, des titres, des revenus, des intérêts et des placements."⁶²

In *un Million*, Léopold Bonnin (Lesable in *l'Héritage*) finds that his wife can only inherit the fortune of her aunt in case a child is born within three years. Mme Luneau, in *le Cas de Madame Luneau*, likewise finds that she can prevent the property of her deceased husband, Anthime Isidore, from reverting to his family, only in case a child is born to her within ten months. The Frédéric Morel of *un Million* (Maze in *l'Héritage*) plays a rôle similar to that of Hippolyte Lacour in *le Cas de Madame Luneau*.⁶³

The descriptions of hallucination in *Lui* and in *la petite Roque* have one marked feature in common. In *Lui*, the author relates how he felt an irresistible impulse to look again at the arm-chair, in which his spectral visitor had appeared to sit.⁶⁴ In *la petite Roque* Renardet,

⁶⁰ *La Confession*, p. 283. Cf. *Moiron*, in *Clair de lune*, pp. 193-204.

⁶¹ *l'Héritage*, in *Miss Harriet*, p. 71.

⁶² *Divorce*, in *le Rosier de Madame Husson*, p. 181.

⁶³ *Un Million*, in *Miss Harriet (Appendice)*, p. 332. Cf. *l'Héritage* in the same volume, pp. 39-164, and *le Cas de Madame Luneau*, in *les sœurs Rondoli*, pp. 153-162. ⁶⁴ *Lui*, in *les Sœurs Rondoli*, p. 101.

resist as he will, is compelled to peer once more through the window, where he is well aware that he will behold again the phantom of his little victim, lying on the spot where the crime was committed.⁶⁵

Two stories of illicit love, *un Fils* and *le Père*, are alike in their recital of the progress of passion. The eighteen-year-old servant girl in *un Fils*, returning at midnight after a deliberate absence, apparently undergoes the same inner struggle as Louise, in *le Père*, who returns to François Tessier after nine days.⁶⁶

In *les Bijoux*, M. Lantin finds that the jewels acquired by his wife, which he had supposed to be merely paste imitations, are really genuine. The famous story entitled *la Parure*, published a year later, furnishes the reverse side of the medallion. The necklace of Mme Forestier, supposed to be genuine, turns out to be false.⁶⁷

The most striking instance of Maupassant's repetition of episodes has already been pointed out by M. Maynial. In *une Vie*, Jeanne discovers some old love-letters, and reads them over with tragic results. This story is found also in *Père Milon* and in *Nos lettres*. To this list, Miss A. R. Riddell, in her forthcoming thesis on *Flaubert and Maupassant*, adds *Suicides*, *la Veillée*, *le Pardon*, and *l'Ordonnance*.

Not only repetitions of themes and plots, but also of phraseology were frequent in Maupassant's writings. It was as if he had certain formulas, that never needed to be worked over to fit the occasion. Compare the following

⁶⁵ *La petite Roque*, in the collection of that title, p. 55.

⁶⁶ *Un Fils*, in *Contes de la bécasse*, pp. 202, 203. Cf. *le Père*, in *Contes du jour et de la nuit*, pp. 36, 37.

⁶⁷ *Les Bijoux*, in *Clair de lune*, pp. 139-152. Cf. *la Parure*, in *Contes du jour et de la nuit*, pp. 57-74.

descriptions of vehicles in *la Maison Tellier* and in *la Ficelle*:

La Maison Tellier

Quand les chevaux furent à l'écurie, il y eut ainsi tout le long de la grande route une double ligne de guimbardes rustiques, charrettes, cabriolets, tilburys, chars à bancs, voitures de toute forme et de tout âge, penchées sur le nez ou bien cul par terre et les brancards au ciel.⁶⁸

La Ficelle

. . . comme la vaste cour était pleine de véhicules de toute race, charrettes, cabriolets, chars à bancs, tilburys, carrioles innombrables, jaunes de crotte, déformées, levant au ciel, comme deux bras, leurs brancards, ou bien le nez par terre et le derrière en l'air.⁶⁹

In *une Vie*, Mme Adélaïde weeps thus:

. . . Ses pleurs, des pleurs bruyants poussés comme par un soufflet de forge, semblaient lui sortir en même temps du nez, de la bouche et des yeux. . .⁷⁰

Renardet, under stress of emotion, weeps in similar fashion:

. . . il poussa une sorte d'éternuement bruyant qui lui sortit en même temps par le nez et par la bouche: et tirant son mouchoir de sa poche, il se mit à pleurer dedans, toussant, sanglotant et se mouchant avec bruit.⁷¹

M. Chantal, in the climax of *Mlle Perle*, breaks down likewise:

Il pleurait d'une façon désolante et ridicule, comme pleure une éponge qu'on presse, par les yeux, par le nez et la bouche en même temps. Et il toussait, crachait, se mouchait dans le linge à craie, s'essuyait les yeux, éternuait, recommençait à couler par toutes les fentes de son visage, avec un bruit de gorge qui faisait penser aux gargarismes.⁷²

⁶⁸ *La Maison Tellier*, in the collection of that title, p. 29.

⁶⁹ *La Ficelle*, in *Miss Harriet*, p. 218.

⁷⁰ *Une Vie*, p. 83.

⁷¹ *La petite Roque*, in the collection of that title, p. 18.

⁷² *Mlle Perle*, in *la petite Roque*, p. 136.

The following description of flies crawling over a corpse is found in *En famille*:

. . . et sur le drap, sur la face aux yeux fermés, sur les deux mains allongées, des petites mouches grimpaient, allaient, venaient, se promenaient sans cesse, visitaient la vieille, attendant leur heure prochaine.⁷³

In *la petite Roque*, this description becomes more detailed, and a witticism is added:

. . . Une grosse mouche à ventre bleu, qui se promenait le long d'une cuisse, s'arrêta sur les taches de sang, repartit, remontant toujours, parcourant le flanc de sa marche vive et saccadée, grimpa sur un sein, puis redescendit pour explorer l'autre, cherchant quelque chose à boire sur cette morte. Les deux hommes regardaient ce point noir errant.

Le médecin dit: "Comme c'est joli, une mouche sur la peau. Les dames du dernier siècle avaient bien raison de s'en coller sur la figure. Pourquoi a-t-on perdu cet usage-là?"⁷⁴

The taking of an oath in rustic communities is described always with the same formula. In *la Ficelle*: "Le paysan [Maître Hauchecorne], furieux, leva la main, cracha de côté pour attester son honneur . . ." ⁷⁵ In *Tribunaux rustiques*, Isidore "lève la main et crache de côté pour appuyer son serment."⁷⁶ Satan and Saint Michel, in *la Légende du Mont-Saint-Michel*, made a bargain in like manner: "Ils se tapèrent dans la main, crachèrent de côté pour indiquer que l'affaire était faite . . ." ⁷⁷

Some of the repetitions of scenes in Maupassant's writings were due to a trick of style which he had learned from Mérimée. In order to avoid appearing in his narrative, Mérimée would pretend that his story was written by another author (*Clara Gazul* and *La Guzla*), that he

⁷³ *En famille*, in *la Maison Tellier*, p. 173.

⁷⁴ *La petite Roque*, cit., p. 17.

⁷⁵ *La Ficelle*, cit., p. 222.

⁷⁶ *Monsieur Parent*, p. 181.

⁷⁷ *Clair de lune*, p. 107.

was merely publishing a document that he had discovered (*l'Abbé Aubain*), or perhaps that the story was related to him by an acquaintance—by a military friend, as in *l'Enlèvement de la redoute*, by a bandit encountered during an archæological expedition, as in *Carmen*. In his short stories, this device reduced itself to the fiction of an assembly of guests, one of whom related the narrative. Not like Mérimée for the sake of impersonality, but for dramatic effect, Maupassant often resorted to this device. It had the advantage that the author was able to depict the effect of his narrative upon an audience, whose remarks, reported at the close of the story, were usually in the same strain. A woman observes, at the end of *un Loup*: "C'est égal, c'est beau d'avoir des passions pareilles."⁷⁸ In *un Fils*, the senator makes a similar observation.⁷⁹ With sentimental conviction, a woman exclaims at the conclusion of *le Bonheur*: "Qu'importe! elle fut heureuse."⁸⁰ The one dissenting voice is that of a hunter of robust frame who exclaims, in *une Veuve*: "N'est-ce pas malheureux d'être sentimental à ce point là!"⁸¹

To sum up: great were the liberties that the "realists" took with plots, character, and verbiage, even when they seemed to be reporting faithfully the events which fell under their observation, and the worst offender of all in this respect was Maupassant, by common consent the purest of the "realists." It would appear indeed to be a sort of law that the greater an author's reputation for realism, the more he juggles his materials. On the other hand, the more "Romantic" an author is, the greater is

⁷⁸ *Le Loup*, in *Clair de lune*, p. 44.

⁷⁹ *Contes de la bécasse*, p. 213.

⁸⁰ *Contes du jour et de la nuit*, p. 87.

⁸¹ *Clair de lune*, p. 124.

his insistence on a skeleton of fact—the wildly imaginative Dumas père being the most assiduous of all in his use of historical documents.

There is doubtless a reason behind this curious phenomenon. The true quarrel of the “realists” with the “Romanticists” was not over the question of realism at all, but of method of documentation. The “Romanticists” got their materials from everywhere, but most often from printed records. They were frequently rather scrupulous in their regard for accuracy, and it was no mere accident that the great “Romantic” historian Michelet was one of the chief advocates of the scientific method of consulting the sources directly. The “realists,” on the other hand, desired to banish all written sources, and to record only what had been actually observed recently—ostensibly the laboratory method carried into literature. Yet materials obtained from hearsay were accepted quite as readily as what they themselves had jotted down on their pads. For example, M. Charles Lapierre suggested to Maupassant the idea of *la Maison Tellier*, and furnished him the plot of *Ce cochon de Morin*, while Monsieur Joseph Aubourg, *propriétaire-cultivateur*, used to amuse Maupassant with funny stories about Longueville, near Dieppe, and was thus the source for *le Crime du Père Boniface*, *le Lapin*, and *Boitelle*.⁸²

Evidently the stories obtained from hearsay could not possibly be so accurately recorded, so “realistic” in any true sense, as the more carefully controlled historical documents of the “Romanticists.” They were acceptable to the “realists,” none the less, simply because they were derived from some sort of observation—not read in books. One reason, then, why Maupassant qualifies as the most

⁸² A. Lumbroso, *op. cit.*, pp. 358-360.

“realistic” of modern French prose writers was that he had undoubtedly read least of them all.

Even Maupassant occasionally fell from grace, however, and used materials that were in no sense drawn directly from life, but were borrowed from Balzac, Bourget, and especially Flaubert, as I attempt to show in a forthcoming paper on the *Literary Relationships of Maupassant*. So far as realistic theory was concerned, therefore, Maupassant might easily have written tales as wildly fantastic as the melodramas of Maturin and Lewis. That he did not fall into some of the excesses committed by his contemporaries in the name of realism—by the Goncourts in *Mme Gervaisais*, by Daudet in *l’Evangéliste*—was due to his naturally sane powers of observation, not to the *leçons d’école*. In fact, despite his early training in accuracy of description, he relied less upon realistic background—that much abused product of a natural evolution from “Romantic” local color—than Balzac, even than Flaubert. It was, let it be repeated, almost wholly his regard for the long-discredited classical principle of *la vraisemblance* that enabled him to create a greater impression of reality than any other French author of fiction during the nineteenth century.

II. However, aside from his failures in matters of objectivity and of realistic technique—shortcomings that have generally escaped attention because they were so well redeemed by a classical *raison*—there was a general defect in his whole mental make-up which has occasioned frequent remark. In the name of realism, he searched life not for its beauty, but for its ugliness, its crudity, its vulgarity, by a special application as it were of Hugo’s doctrine of “all in all.” The theories of Darwin, bolstering up the notions of the naturalists regarding the animalism of man,

gave a scientific sanction to what was in reality a Romantically inspired *bas-fondmanie*—untrue because narrow and distorted.

Romanticism, by its subjectivity, tended to emphasize the emotional and other lower centers of the mind. Yet it was always restrained by a sense of the picturesque, which replaced that classical mentor, decorum. Thus Hugo, portraying gross natures and unwholesome surroundings in that part of *les Misérables* entitled *le Mauvais pauvre*, feels obliged to include at least a chapter entitled *une Rose dans la misère*. Naturalism went one step further, depicting what could be perceived not only by the eye and the ear, but also by the taste and the smell—and the picturesque gave way to the base and the disgusting.

How far Maupassant had drifted in this matter from the *raison* of the classicists may be shown by a few comparisons.

When he writes: “Nous ne savons rien, nous ne voyons rien, nous ne pouvons rien, nous ne devinons rien, nous n’imaginons rien,”⁸³ he is merely repeating the notions scattered in the *Apologie de Raimond de Sebonde* of Montaigne, that *honnête homme* of the sixteenth century. Maupassant declares: “. . . Nous sommes des bêtes, nous resterons des bêtes que l’instinct domine et que rien ne change.”⁸⁴ So does Montaigne ridicule the idea of distinguishing man above his fellow-animals, the cat, the dog, and the elephant. However, the pessimism of Maupassant allows not one ray of hope, whereas even the *Apologie* concludes with the optimistic affirmation that an eternal God is, and that possibly he may perform a metamorphosis in man.

⁸³ *Sur l'eau*, p. 43.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 54.

Coming to the classical period proper, we find La Bruyère, like the rest of his century, believing in the animalism of peasants. In the chapter of the *Caractères* entitled *De l'homme*, he speaks of "certains animaux farouches, des mâles et des femelles, répandus par la campagne, noirs, livides, et tout brûlés de soleil, attachés à la terre qu'ils fouillent et qu'ils remuent avec une opiniâtreté invincible. . . ." So ignoble does La Bruyère consider the peasant that he regards him, like the drunkard, as only suitable for treatment by an author of farce. "Comment pourrait-il faire le fonds ou l'action principale de la comédie?" he asks rhetorically.⁸⁵ But La Bruyère does not neglect to observe that the peasant, animal that he is, has yet an articulate voice; that in his face is written the image of a man; that indeed he is a man.⁸⁶

In Maupassant's writings, the picture of the bestiality of the peasant is redeemed by no considerations of humanity.

La Rapet s'exaspérait; chaque minute écoulée lui semblait, maintenant, du temps volé, de l'argent volé. Elle avait envie, une envie folle de prendre par le cou cette vieille bourrique, cette vieille têtue, cette vieille obstinée, et d'arrêter, en serrant un peu, ce petit souffle rapide qui lui volait son temps et son argent.⁸⁷

Like the classicists, Maupassant is fond of treating the subject of the eternal feminine. Yet if we look for his equivalent for the "Ewig-Weibliche," leading humanity upward, of the classical part of *Faust*, what shall we discover? It is "le Féminin, l'odieux et affolant Féminin!"⁸⁸

In justice it should be admitted that some critics note a marked progress in Maupassant's moral attitude during

⁸⁵ *Des ouvrages de l'esprit*, in the *Caractères*.

⁸⁶ *De l'homme*, *cit.*

⁸⁷ *Le Diable*, in *le Horla*, p. 131.

⁸⁸ *L'Épingle*, in *M. Parent*, p. 195.

the closing years of his career. Gilbert, for instance, feels that his very faithfulness to nature caused him to depict an increasing number of honorable characters.⁸⁹ Lemaître and Doumic also concede the moral improvement of our author, but explain the phenomenon in a different manner.⁹⁰

Frankly, I am inclined to the opinion of Henry James, who says of Maupassant: "I can remember no instance in which he sketches any considerable capacity for conduct, and his women betray that capacity as little as his men."⁹¹ To put the matter concretely, the author of *le Rosier de Mme Husson* and of *la Main gauche* can boast of little change, in any moral respect, from the writer who was with difficulty restrained by Havard from giving to his *Contes de la bécasse* the significant title of "Ce cochon de Morin." For confirmation of this view, let the reader compare again the tales about M. Patissot with the later stories entitled *Souvenir*, and *la Patronne*, to determine whether Maupassant's moral tendency was distinctly upward.

While conceding no marked spiritual regeneration in Maupassant during the latter years of his life, I should also not accept the Rousseauistic morality of Tolstoy, who would represent Maupassant as a paragon of primitive innocence, who gradually became contaminated with worldly ideas.⁹² How far Tolstoy is obliged to twist the facts to fit his theory is evidenced by such statements as

⁸⁹ E. Gilbert, *le Roman en France pendant le XIX^e siècle* (1909), p. 432.

⁹⁰ J. Lemaître in *Revue bleue* (3d series, no. 26, vol. XLIII), June 29, 1889, p. 803; René Doumic, in *Revue des deux mondes*, CXX (1893), p. 193.

⁹¹ *Fortnightly Review*, vol. XLIX (1888), p. 385.

⁹² *Guy de Maupassant*, by Count L. N. Tolstoi. Translation by Charles Johnston. In *the Arena*, 1894-95, vol. XI, p. 25.

that *une Vie*—the “pessimistic lubricity” of which an English critic declares to have been “too much for even Paris bookstalls”⁹³—was the greatest novel since *les Misérables*. *Bel-Ami* in his opinion deserves a higher moral rank than *Pierre et Jean*, which is generally conceded to be the author’s best work, and is called by Henry James “a faultless production.” Probably Tolstoy caps the climax when he declares that *le Horla*—usually regarded as evidence of the author’s predisposition to insanity, despite the protestations of Mme de Maupassant—was a proof that Maupassant realized the soul’s longings for another world, which was not material.

Even the very foundation of Tolstoy’s theory—the youthful innocence of Maupassant—is shaky. Let us grant the sincerity of Turgenieff, that staunch champion of the French realists, who had represented Maupassant to Tolstoy as a good son, a faithful friend, and a strong sympathizer of the working classes, who was also notable for his uprightness with the fair sex—to a “wonderful, almost incredible” degree. It is true enough that the testimony of Turgenieff on the last point is apparently corroborated by that of Maupassant’s mother, who relates the story of a gardener whose pretty daughter waited on Maupassant at Étretat. In reply to a comment of a neighbor, the gardener answered: “Je connais M. Guy. Une jeune fille est respectée chez lui comme chez sa mère.”⁹⁴ The fact remains that this anecdote was merely intended to illustrate the point that Maupassant was “souvent un séducteur, mais jamais un dépravateur.” Furthermore, many readers will fail to see anything “wonderful, almost incredible” in the fact that Maupassant did not have his

⁹³ W. E. Garrett Fisher, in *Temple Bar*, vol. ciii (1894), p. 504.

⁹⁴ A. Lombroso, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

first *liaison*—the one with “la belle E. . .”—until he had reached the age of sixteen.⁹⁵

As for the question of Maupassant's character, consequently, there seems to be no special evidence that his moral nature, his moral vision, and consequently his capacity for truthfully reflecting the moral world, underwent any considerable change—for better or for worse—during the ten years (1880-1890) of his principal literary productivity. For his licentiousness, then, perhaps more than for any other quality that has been discussed here, he must be classed among the Romanticists.

One point that Tolstoy has grasped, however, which has eluded practically every other writer on Maupassant, is the fact that our author sympathized—for good or for ill—with his characters, and was thus far less impersonal than has generally been estimated. *Une Vie* was great, declares Tolstoy, because the author's *sympathies* were evidently on the side of the good. *Pierre et Jean* was an inferior production, because the author's *sympathies* with the good were more uncertain.

Thus the question of Maupassant's moral standpoint is interwoven not only with that of the author's capacity for realism—in the broadest sense of the term—but also with that of impersonality. Not only did Maupassant, by depicting an excessive number of reprobates, give a false, and thus by definition, a Romantic picture of life, but also he became Romantically subjective when he allowed his sympathies for certain of his immoral characters to appear. The pity of it is that matters did not end there: his sensuality leads him to the weakness of a morbid fear of death, which ends all sensual pleasures—and in the expression of this unworthy sentiment his characters, far from

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

being impersonal creations, are only too often his mouth-pieces.

His feeling towards death is lyrically expressed, as we might expect, in his poetry. In *Au bord de l'eau* he writes:

Puis, on nous jetera dans quelque trou caché,
Comme on fait aux gens morts en état de péché,⁹⁶

and a similar mood is evident in *la dernière Escapade*.

A little lyricism may be forgiven to a poet, however, even if all traces of Romanticism are supposed to have been swept from his writings. In the novel, on the other hand, which deals essentially with the *non-moi*, as M. Lanson justly observes, we have a right to expect a more impassive attitude.

Yet, we find the same melancholy strain in one story after another. Like the doomed hero of *un Lâche*, like his own *Yvette*, it is evident that his mind is brooding constantly on "cette pourriture, à cette bouillie noire et puante que ferait sa chair."⁹⁷ For him, the greatest tragedy is the sight of a gay, handsome, gallant young man grown decrepit; of a beautiful girl who has turned a stout matron.⁹⁸ "Lorsque les cheveux blancs apparaissent, et qu'on perd, chaque jour, dès la trentaine, un peu de sa vigueur, un peu de sa confiance, un peu de sa santé, comment garder sa foi dans un bonheur possible?" he wails.⁹⁹ The author, thinking of the encroachments of age upon the physical beauty of the heroine of *l'Épave* sobs, as he does also in the concluding chapters of *Fort comme la*

⁹⁶ *Des vers*, p. 47. Cf. *La dernière Escapade*, *ibid.*, p. 79.

⁹⁷ *Yvette*, p. 117.

⁹⁸ *Adieu*, in *Contes du jour et de la nuit*, pp. 249-257.

⁹⁹ *Chronique du Gaulois*, Feb. 24, 1884. See Gustave Chatel, *Mau-passant peint par lui-même*, in *Revue bleue*, fourth series, VI (July 11, 1896), p. 47.

mort. His tenderest sympathy goes out to the aged, who have lost forever the joys of youth. It is a note which he strikes in *Menuet*, which ends in a choking embrace, and in *Julie Romain*.¹⁰⁰

This pervading pessimism is relieved, however, to a certain extent by a sense of humor which recalls the spirit of La Fontaine, and of the *fabliaux*. Thus, despite his morbidity, he is free from much of the usual misanthropy of the Romanticists, their hatred of life, which

As was well known . . . by Plato,
. . . is not worth a potato.

For this feeling he substitutes what Zola has called "l'éternel chant d'amour qu'il a chanté à la vie."

The answer to the question to what extent Maupassant was Romantic depends, then, in the first place on general considerations. If we are willing to allow to Maupassant the restricted field of his choosing—namely the present, not the past, the world of sense, not that of the spirit—it is necessary to admit that he was on the whole the most perfect of the French realists. Even here, however, he has a few shortcomings, both in his manner, and in his method of assembling materials. In his manner, he is frequently subjective, especially when dealing with those feelings which have an instinctive basis. More rarely, he allows his realism to be impaired by rhetorical devices—such as

¹⁰⁰ *Julie Romain*, in *la petite Roque*, pp. 203-218. The foundation of this story is perhaps indicated in a letter which Maupassant wrote the same year to Madame Lecomte du Nouy, in which he mentions a woman who had been beautiful, rich and happy, but was now old, ruined and wretched in every way. Being urged by Maupassant, she related confidentially the story of her past life and of her present misfortunes. From the letter, it appears that her home was in Nice. The home of Julie Romain was in the same locality, for from it could be seen the carriages going from Nice to Monaco (*Correspondance*, in *Boule de suif*, p. clix, Dec. 20, 1886).

the pathetic fallacy—which he introduces for dramatic effect. In his method of assembling materials, he is often no more realistic than the apostles of the so-called Romantic school, a fact indicated by the frequency with which he treats subjects akin to theirs. While professing to record only what he has observed, he is really guilty of adjusting his materials arbitrarily, as on a checker-board, or perhaps altering them altogether, in order to obtain a desired effect. That he generally creates a wonderful impression of reality is therefore due to his classical quality of *vraisemblance*, not to the virtue of the *leçons d'école* which he professes to follow. If, on the other hand, we understand realism in a broader sense, as having to do with all life—past and present, recorded as well as unrecorded, the spiritual world as well as the world of sense and flesh, he is quite inadequate as a realist. In his work, the impure and the nauseous are vastly overemphasized, and often in a manner which is subjective. Moreover, he has no normal manly philosophy to buoy him up amid a world of change and decay. We hear too frequently his plaintive wail about death and destruction, through the lips of his characters, to deny that he is not only Romantically lyrical, but also that he is false as a realist in the largest sense of the term. He would have been truer had his paganism been redeemed by even so crude a substitute for real spiritual values as the Titanism of the Romantic school. Instead, he depicts his Yvette as having the Satanic temper of Éloa, but not her heavenly descent. Many of his heroes have the incestuousness of Manfred, without his Promethean spark. Others have the lawless spirit of Childe Harold, without the “gladiator’s look.”

OLIN H. MOORE.